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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 001369

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: SOUTHERN NIGERIA POLITICAL TIDBITS FOR OCTOBER 2006

REF: LAGOS 1285

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (C) Summary: President Obasanjo tells Speakers to stop further gubernatorial impeachments. Police in Rivers State captured six men alleged to have kidnapped expatriates in Port Harcourt and Eket. Bayelsa Governor Jonathon touts bridges, housing, and orphanages on the gubernatorial campaign trail. People's Democratic Party (PDP) may have a hard time holding the governorships of southwestern states where the party's record of performance has been mixed. The Government of Nigeria still has not named a committee to address union complaints about Niger Delta security problems. Governorship races a good predictor for the presidential race. End summary.

OBASANJO TELLS STATE ASSEMBLY SPEAKERS TO CALL OFF
IMPEACHMENT FEVER

¶2. (C) Enugu State Speaker Abel Chukwu told Polspec that, President Obasanjo met all the state speakers in Abuja to insist that they desist from initiating additional gubernatorial impeachments. Chukwu said Obasanjo appeared clearly disturbed by the impeachment cases, and the President told the speakers he would not look favorably on more impeachments.

RIVERS STATE: POLICE CAPTURE SIX ALLEGED KIDNAPPERS

¶3. (C) On October 31, police in Rivers State arrested six men alleged to have kidnapped six expatriates in Port Harcourt August 13 and seven ExxonMobil contractors in Akwa Ibom on October 3. An October 20 tip-off led police to a suspect who then provided police the names of five accomplices, according to media reports. ExxonMobil's Deepwater General Manager told PolOff November 1 that two of the individuals were, according to his security officers, involved in the ExxonMobil kidnapping. The police hope these individuals will divulge information incriminating much bigger fish, including some government officials, he said.

BAYELSA GOVERNOR CAMPAIGNING ON DEVELOPMENT AND REFUGEES

¶4. (SBU) Bayelsa State Governor Goodluck Jonathan is pushing development efforts, resettling refugees, and campaigning for the upcoming gubernatorial election with zest. According to the Governor's Special Advisor on Investment and Economic Development, Evangelist Fostor Ogola, roads and bridges are

being constructed in Bayelsa State at an impressive clip. The Governor is importing hundreds of pre-fabricated units to provide low income housing. An orphanage recently opened by the Governor will accommodate 500 children.

15. (SBU) According to Francis Sheen, Executive Secretary to the Bayelsa Partnership Initiative, Governor Jonathan earmarked 15 hectares for resettlement of Bakassi refugees. Sheen told PolOff that Jonathan resettled 5,000 of the refugees in the local governing area of his chief opponent for the People's Democratic Party (PDP) nomination, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) Financial Director Timi Alaibe. Jonathan hopes that through this influx he might wrest the area from Alaibe, or at least, have such a number of supporters in the area that Alaibe would find it difficult to win his own ward, let alone have enough time to canvass effectively the whole State. Jonathan also plans to attend the Ijaw National Congress convention in Houston in November to court the Nigerian diaspora in support of his 2007 gubernatorial bid, Sheen said.

OGUN STATE OFFICIAL PREDICTS PDP TROUBLE IN THE SOUTHWEST

16. (SBU) In an October 27 meeting with Pol/Econ Chief and Poloff, Chief of Staff to the Ogun State Governor Kayode Samuel said the PDP is in trouble in the Southwest. Samuel predicted that while the PDP won the five governorships of Ekiti, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, and Ogun States in the last election, it will be hard pressed to repeat this feat in 2007. The public will decide for or against the PDP based on performance, Samuel said, and the performance of PDP governors in these states has been mixed. (Comment: Oyo and

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Ekiti, given the storm and stress over impeachments in those States, will be hotly contested. The PDP will have trouble holding these two. Ondo is only slightly less problematic. End comment)

STRIKE FOLLOW-UP: FG TO MEET WITH UNIONS?

17. (U) As recently as October 16 Elijah Okougbo, General Secretary of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas

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(NUPENG), said the Federal Government (FG) planned to hold talks with Nupeng and Pengassan regarding the Niger Delta security concerns that sparked a September strike against oil facilities. The oil sector unions plan to provide the GON with a position paper detailing Niger Delta security problems and offering recommendations to improve the union members' work environment.

18. (U) However, on November 3 Peter Esele, President of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Sector Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) told Poloff the oil sector unions would meet November 9-10 to discuss the government's failure to establish a stakeholders committee to address the Niger Delta's security problems. Esele said the Government's slow response warrants further action, stating "The Government only understands force." Esele was skeptical that the committee would ever materialize.

PROFESSOR: GOVERNORSHIP RACES PREDICTORS OF PRESIDENCY

19. (U) In a talk with Poloff, University of Ibadan lecturer Adeolu Durotoye predicted that, since the gubernatorial elections are scheduled a week before the presidential election, they would predict which party each state will support for the presidency. Durotoye also predicted that the

Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) and the police will both play an inordinant role in electing the next president, as they will support the candidate they believe has the best chance.

¶10. (U) This cable was cleared by Embassy Abuja.
BROWNE